

In the Bookstores...

Medical English



Peter Gross: Medical English. Zweisprachige Texte zur Vorbereitung auf die klinische Auslandstätigkeit. Georg Thieme Verlag Stuttgart, 2000. ISBN: 9783137263050 (Paperback + CD-Rom). EUR 29.95, GBP approx. 22.35. 260 pages.

Every non-native medical writer might once have struggled with specific medical terms that are not

covered by the otherwise excellent online dictionaries. So what hides behind the very promising title of this book, *Medical English*?

Well, as the subtitle already indicates, it has actually been written for MD students who are planning to do their practical year in an Anglo-Saxon country. Every chapter of the book is bilingual: the left side contains the English text, which is translated into German on the opposite side.

The first chapter can be considered a short medical dictionary: it lists the terminology needed to describe the human body, separated by body part (head, neck, chest, arm, abdomen, back, and leg) and also includes pathological abnormalities. Some of the vocabularies are visually displayed by drawings and labelling of the respective body part, whereas others are presented as vocabulary lists. Unfortunately, not much care has been taken in the formatting of these lists: as some expressions are longer in one language than in the other and break over the line, the corresponding English and German terms do not always stand side by side, and in some cases the translation of a term is even shifted to another column.

In chapters 2 and 3, the content starts to become more specific for routine work in a clinic. Still in the style of a dictionary, chapter 2 lists names and expressions for medical equipment and instruments, laboratory tests, and medical examinations and treatments, whereas chapter 3 provides guidance to the procedure of the medical workup performed when a patient is admitted to a hospital. The main part of the book, however, starts in chapter 4, where 10 case histories are given, covering different medical conditions. Each case history is followed by a question-answer section and a short selection of colloquial and medical terms in the respective field. To overcome the disadvantage of missing phonetics in the book, a CD is included providing 5 of the 10 case histories as an audio book. It remains inscrutable why not all case histories are covered by the audio book, and why the author chose a different order for the covered ones in the audio book than in the text book.

After the case histories, short chapters describe the hospital structure, patient care, educational programmes, and the conversation style between patient and physician. Little goodies here are a selection of interesting Internet pages,

including, among others, medical libraries, medical associations and organizations, and clinical practice guidelines, and a section on abbreviations, which is additionally provided as a handy little abbreviations booklet. On 44 pages, the most common abbreviations are listed with the English and German full-text terms. Also covered are academic titles and job titles as well as units of measurement and their conversion into the metric system.

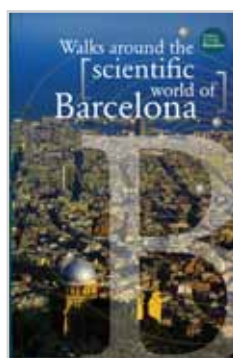
Despite the promising title, most sections of this book are of no relevance for the medical writer. If you are looking for a helpful medical dictionary, you might instead want to check out the *Dictionary of Health Policy (German Association of Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies, February 2005)*. Although surely not a complete selection, you can find useful abbreviations from the fields of medicine, pharmaceutical industry, and labour and social law.

Birgit Von Janowsky

Frankfurt, Germany

birgit@trilogypublishing.com

A special guidebook to science in Barcelona coauthored by Mercè Piqueras presenter of the welcome lecture at the EMWA conference



Xavier Duran, Mercè Piqueras. Walks around the scientific world of Barcelona. Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2002. ISBN 84-7609-999-1 (paperback). EUR 19, GBP approx. 14.17. 362 pages. www.bcn.es/publications.

This guidebook is a little out of the ordinary and will be of special interest to delegates attending EMWA's Spring Conference in

Barcelona. The richly illustrated guidebook was commissioned by Barcelona's city council to alert visitors to the city's scientific and technological tradition. While the first part of the book is devoted to this history the second provides itineraries for the scientifically interested for viewing the city's various areas. The following is an extract from a commentary on the book provided by the publishers. A review of the book can also be found in *Nature* (2004, 427:586-7).

"Details [are given] that pedestrians do not usually notice, such as the elements that facilitated the distribution of water and power, or those that permitted the basic road infrastructures. ... The guide recommends taking a scientific

In the Bookstores...

ic look at the buildings and museums and their contents. ...A visit to the original Hospital de la Santa Creu provides a thread that leads us inexorably to today's university hospitals. And the current research centres of the city hark back to the Municipal Laboratory. But the book is not just about buildings and institutions; it is also about people. The guide allows us to discover that Santiago Ramón y Cajal established the theory of the neuron while he was lecturing at the University of Barcelona and living on Carrer del Notariat...Details [are given] on the species of plants found in the parks and gardens of the city of Barcelona—one of the many pieces of information provided by this original guide.”

I enjoyed the little touches in the book such as an explanation that the word vaccine, which is taken from the Latin for cow, was first used by the Englishman, Edward Jenner, in 1792 after he discovered that injecting people with a substance extracted from cows suffering from cowpox immunised the humans against smallpox. A smallpox vaccination clinic was set up on Pelai street in Barcelona by Frederic Corominas i Pedemonte who extracted the vaccine directly from the pustules of a cow suffering from the illness meaning, the guide points out, that in this case the term vaccination was taken literally, it really did come from a cow.

The book can be purchased from:

http://www.laie.es/html2006/busqueda/detalle.php?fr_codLibro=324253

or from the bookshops situated at one of the following 3 central addresses in Barcelona: Pau Claris, 85; Montalegre, 5 (CCCB); Montcada, 15-23 (Museo Picasso).

Elise Langdon-Neuner
langdoe@baxter.com

Over & over again



In Robert Harris's fiction *Imperium*, Tiro says of Cicero that he was fond of repeating certain phrases, “thus proving what most people already know, that politicians essentially say the same thing over and over again”. Marcus Tullius Tiro was Cicero's secretary for 36 years and in the book he claims to have invented shorthand to record Cicero's speeches. It is thought that Tiro, who was a slave, invented the shorthand system of Tironian notes. This is supported by Plutarch who wrote that Cicero's clerks were the first Romans to record speeches in shorthand.

One such note was & which is a condensation of 'et', the Latin for 'and'. The alphabet used to end with & after Z. When reciting the alphabet confusion between letters and words was avoided by saying 'per se' ('by itself') before a letter that could also be used as a word, e.g. I, A. Therefore when you came to the end of the alphabet you would say 'and per se and' which on the Chinese whisper principle became 'ampersand'.

The & is no longer tagged onto the end of the alphabet. But the dwindling status of the ampersand is being revived by SMS text messaging, where it is used not only to mean 'and' but to replace these collected letters in a word, e.g. b&.

Elise Langdon-Neuner
langdoe@baxter.com

Sources: 1. *Imperium* Robert Harris 2006, The Random House Group Limited, London
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ampersand>

Call for Applicants for EMWA Professional Development Committee

In May 2008, a vacancy will arise on the EMWA Professional Development Committee (EPDC). I would like to invite applications from EMWA members for this position.

As an EPDC member, you will be involved in all aspects of developing and maintaining the EMWA Professional Development Programme (EPDP), ensuring quality of the workshops in the programme and supporting the development of new workshops through mentoring of new workshop leaders. By serving on the EPDC you can help shape the future of this vital programme at the heart of EMWA's

activities. Furthermore, as in the past, future candidates for the post of EMWA Education Officer will be drawn from the EPDC members.

If you would like to apply for this position, or would like to know more about it, please contact me at stephen.delooze@accovion.com, or any EPDC member (details on the EMWA website) who will be happy to provide further details.

Stephen de Looze
Education Officer